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ABSTRACT

This booklet explains how primary teachers and their schools will be involved in England's National Literacy Strategy (NLS). It addresses the following questions: What is the National Literacy target? How will the target be achieved? What must primary schools have done by the end of the summer term 1999? What will happen at the literacy hour? How should school literacy targets be set? How will local education authorities (LEAs) and central government work with schools? What will happen for schools that need more intensive support? What will the role of parents be? and How will the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) and the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) support the strategy? (PM)

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Further information

## Implementation of the NLS: A message from the Secretary of State

Literacy is at the heart of this government's drive to raise standards for all pupils. One of our first announcements was our intention that, by 2002, 80% of 11 year olds should reach the standard of English expected for their age. The demands of the modern world mean that we need to give all children the opportunity to achieve the highest standards they can.

This is a tough target. But it can be reached if schools, parents, LEAs and the government work together. It is also important to create a national climate in which literacy is valued, and everyone shares responsibility for helping children to achieve the target. That is why we have designated the school year 1998/99 as the National Year of Reading.

Whilst in Opposition, I established a Literacy Task Force under the chairmanship of Professor Michael Barber to develop a strategy for substantially improving literacy standards over a five to ten year period. There was a widespread welcome for the consistent strategy set out in its preliminary report. Its final report was published recently after wide consultation, and is summarised in this booklet. The government has accepted the strategy recommended to reach the national target.

Primary teachers have a vital role to play in the National Literacy Strategy. This booklet explains how they and their schools will be involved in the strategy, and how their role fits with the roles of LEAs, the government and others. I am guaranteeing all primary teachers an entitlement to training in the best methods of teaching literacy. We are aspiring to nothing less than a revolution in literacy standards for all pupils. I look forward to working with you to make that aspiration a reality.

*The Rt. Hon. David Blunkett MP*

*Secretary of State for Education and Employment.*

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## What is the National Literacy target?

The new Labour government announced national targets for literacy and numeracy shortly after taking office. By 2002:

- 80% of all 11 year olds will reach the standard expected for their age in English, i.e. Level 4 in the Key Stage 2 National Curriculum tests; and
- 75% of all 11 year olds will reach the standard expected for their age in maths in the Key Stage 2 National Curriculum tests.

The implementation of the National Literacy Strategy started in 1998. The Numeracy Task Force is currently devising a strategy for raising standards of numeracy. Implementation will be planned so that primary schools are able to devote sufficient attention to both literacy and numeracy.

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## How will the target be achieved?

The National Literacy Strategy is founded on the conviction that effective teaching of reading and writing by primary teachers is the most important factor in pupils' success at mastering these skills. Much good practice already exists, but standards of literacy teaching vary widely between schools. More needs to be done to spread good practice more widely if we are to reach the national target by 2002.

The new national curriculum for initial teacher training will help to ensure that teachers enter the profession equipped to teach literacy well. Existing teachers also need the chance to learn about the most effective methods and how to apply them in the classroom. The National Literacy Strategy will guarantee every primary teacher this opportunity, translating into action the government's pledge to help teachers do their job well. It will be the most ambitious project ever run in this country to support teachers in acquiring practical skills for the classroom.

Some primary schools will be understandably cautious about embracing another major change. That is why we shall be taking care to ensure that the training on offer is high quality, and based on what has been proven to work. The DfEE's National Literacy Project (NLP) has developed a detailed framework for teaching literacy based on evidence of inspection and successful practice in schools. The consultation conducted by the Literacy Task Force revealed strong support for the work of the NLP, and the National Literacy Strategy builds on this work.

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## What must primary schools have done by the end of the summer term 1999?

The contribution of every school - in partnership with its LEA and central government - is vital if we are to reach the national literacy target by 2002.

All primary schools were asked to:

- send the headteacher, a governor, and a key teacher to a two day training conference run by the LEA in summer 1998, covering the management of literacy, the implementation of the literacy hour, setting priorities for staff training, and the literacy curriculum;
- set literacy targets and agree them with the LEA;
- designate a literacy governor to ensure that the school's strategy for reaching its targets remains on course;
- draw up a literacy action plan, agreed with governors, parents and the LEA;
- devote three of the school's INSET days to literacy - one to plan the implementation of a dedicated literacy hour - drawing on national training materials covering topics including the management of literacy at school level, the organisation and structure of the literacy hour, phonics, spelling and vocabulary at Key Stage 1 and teaching reading and writing at Key Stages 1 and 2; and
- introduce a structured literacy hour for all pupils in the autumn term 1998.

All schools will receive financial support from the DfEE's Standards Fund to invest in books.

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## What will happen in the literacy hour?

The literacy hour should allow pupils to work with the teacher for at least 60 per cent of the time, either in the whole class or in groups, with a clear focus on literacy instruction.

| | | KEY STAGE 1 | KEY STAGE 2 |
|---|---|---|---|
| whole class | approx. 15 mins. | Shared text work (a balance of reading and writing) | Shared text work (a balance class of reading and writing) |
| whole class | approx. 15 mins. | Focused word work | A balance, over the term of focused word work or sentence work |
| group work | approx. 20 mins. | 1. Independent reading, writing or word work activities<br><br>2. Teacher works with each group twice in the week, focused on guided reading | 1. Independent reading, writing word and sentence activities<br><br>2. Teacher works with each group for a sustained period (15 minutes) each week on guided reading or writing |
| whole class | approx. 10 mins. | Reviewing, reflecting upon and presenting work covered in the lesson | Reviewing, reflecting upon and presenting work covered in the lesson |

The literacy hour is a key element of the National Literacy Strategy. Schools will be sent further detailed advice about implementing it. It is not the government's intention to impose this structure rigidly. Schools that can demonstrate a good track record in literacy, and show that what they already do is at least as successful in terms of improving pupils' performance, will not be required to implement it in full.

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## How should school literacy targets be set?

This is one of the most important tasks for primary schools. Individual school targets need to be agreed with the LEA, as they will feed into the LEA's overall local target. Each school will start from a different point in relation to the national literacy target of 80%, and individual targets will therefore inevitably differ. Some schools will not be expected to reach 80%, but others will be expected to exceed it. All will need to improve if the national target is to be reached. The National Literacy Strategy is designed to support all schools in achieving the very best for every pupil, offering more intensive support to those schools which have the farthest to go.

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## How will LEAs and central government work with schools?

LEAs will manage the implementation of the strategy at local level. They will set targets and prepare action plans for raising standards of literacy in their areas. An important element of these plans will be the recruitment of literacy consultants to support schools. Each LEA will organise the initial local training conference for primary schools in summer 1998.

The government will provide its share of the necessary funding for the strategy through the Standards Fund. The DfEE's Standards and Effectiveness Unit (SEU) will be responsible for overall management of the strategy, involving experienced teachers in this process. The SEU will train and support the LEAs' consultants through a network of regional directors.

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## What about schools that need more intensive support?

Some schools will need greater support to reach their target. This may be because they are serving areas of social disadvantage where pupils' attainment is low, or because their performance is poor in relation to other schools in the same area. It is estimated that around 40% of schools nationally may need this intensive support. The government plans to provide it for about 10% of schools in 1998/99. More schools will be added each year, so that by 2002 all those in need of additional support will have received it. These schools will follow a more structured programme of training and support taken from the NLP.

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## What will the role of parents be?

Parents' commitment to their children's learning is essential. The opportunities parents give to young children for acquiring language skills from birth onwards have a major influence on their later success in learning to read. The government intends to encourage parents in this role by getting information to them via pre-school education, the health visitor network and doctors' surgeries. We shall also be promoting parental involvement through the National Year of Reading.

The government is committed to introducing home-school contracts to strengthen the link between parents and school, and will be providing further advice on these. At primary level, they will emphasise the importance of parents helping their child learn to read.

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The national literacy target is based on the National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 2. The government expects QCA to continue to monitor and evaluate these tests to ensure that they are effective, fair and consistent over time. Schools will be advised about how they can best give the time and attention needed to literacy and numeracy within the curriculum.

OFSTED will look for evidence of a whole school strategy for raising literacy standards during school inspections. They will also be asked to monitor the impact of the national literacy strategy by surveying a representative sample of primary schools in 1999/2000, in addition to their normal primary inspection programme.

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Further information

## Further information

If you have any questions about the information in this booklet, please ring Ann Dee in the Standards and Effectiveness Unit on 020 7925 6044.

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